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SUBJECT: MFA BRIEFS ON SINO-ARAB COOPERATION FORUM

REF: A) BEIJING 11078

Classified By: Political Internal Unit Chief Kin Moy.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary. Sino-Arab cooperation has risen to a higher level as a result of the May 31- June 1 Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum's Second Ministerial meeting, according to Ambassador in charge of the Sino-Arab Forum Yao Kuangyi. During a readout, Yao indicated that the Action Plan for 2006 ? 2008 calls for extensive exchanges in the political, economic, trade, culture, education, media, environment and personnel arenas. China and the Arab states have also agreed to expand their energy cooperation and Yao said that such cooperation will help to maintain and stabilize world oil market prices. China supports the Arab League's call for the establishment of a nuclear free zone in the Middle East. Yao noted that before the ministerial meeting, China and the Arab League held in-depth discussions on whether the Hamas-led Palestinian government should be invited to attend the meeting. The decision to extend an invitation was based on two factors: the Palestinians were members of the Arab League prior to the formation of the Hamas-led government and that the Hamas-led government was formed as a result of a legitimate election conducted by the Palestinian people. End Summary.

Overview of the Meeting

12. (C) On June 7, Ambassador in charge of the Sino-Arab Forum Yao Kuangyi gave the diplomatic community a readout of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum's Second Ministerial meeting held in Beijing May 31 ? June 1. Ambassador Yao said that the text of speeches the given at the Forum by President Hu Jintao and State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan, as well as the texts of the four signed documents (ref A) have been posted to the MFA's website (www.mfa.gov.cn). All 22 members of the Arab League participated, as did China representatives from the MFA, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Culture and the National Development and Reform Commission. The Forum agreed to promote harmonious coexistence, international cooperation and world peace and stability. Yao said that on the sidelines of the Forum, FM Li Zhaoxing held one-on-one talks with all heads of delegation.

The Action Plan for 2006-2008

13. (C) Yao said that Sino-Arab cooperation has risen to a higher level and is comprehensive. The Action

Plan for 2006-2008 (one of the four documents) contains a "concrete roadmap" for improving the cooperation between China and the Arab states in the political, economic, trade, culture, education, media, environment and personnel arenas. Yao said that the next high-level political meeting will be held in 2007 at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. Under the Action Plan, China and the Arab League countries hope to increase trade volume from 51 billion USD in 2005 to 100 billion USD in 2010. The next meeting between China-Arab entrepreneurs will take place in Amman Jordan in 2007. A "friendship conference" is being planned for November 2006 to be held in Sudan. China has agreed to provide training over the next three years to 1,500 people from Arab states in economics, communications, education, energy, foreign affairs, agriculture and environmental protection. As of June 2, China's environmental protection agency started training officers from 14 Arab states on water contamination prevention.

The Action Plan on Energy

14. (C) Yao said that China and the Arab states have agreed to hold seminars on oil and natural gas cooperation. The first will be sponsored by China's National Development and Reform Commission in December in Xiamen. The two sides have also agreed to jointly train personnel working in oil and natural gas fields. Yao stated that while China imports oil, it is also a large producer of oil as well. Cooperation between China and Arab states will help to maintain and stabilize world oil market prices, Yao stated.

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Aspirations for a Mid East Nuclear Free Zone

15. (C) Arab states and China hope to build a nuclear free zone in the Mid East, Yao stated. Arab states are concerned about Iran acquiring nuclear weapons technology but they are frustrated with what they perceive as a "double standard" on nuclear cooperation. The Arab states contend that all states must sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, according to Yao.

The Decision to Invite Hamas Foreign Minister Al-Zahhar

16. (C) Yao indicated that before the ministerial meeting, China and the Arab League countries held in-depth discussions on whether or not the Hamas-led Palestinian government should be invited to attend the meeting. The decision to extend an invitation was based on two factors: the Palestinians were members of the Arab League prior to the formation of the Hamas-led government and that the Hamas-led government was fored as a result of a legitimate election conducted by the Palestinian people. FM Li Zhaoxing and FM Al-Zahhar met "informally" on the sidelines of the meeting. Li tried to persuade Hamas to consider the needs of its people first and Al-Zahhar issued a statement saying that Hamas is carefully considering the Arab peace-initiative. Yao did not provide further details on FM Li Zhaoxing's one-on-one meetings with Arab leaders.

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